



THE STANDARDS SOLUTION FOR GOVERNMENT

INTRODUCTION



Standards are crucial to the UK's prosperity, contributing some £2.5bn a year to the economy. They ensure the safety, reliability and quality of a huge range of products, services and processes, as well as providing added competitive edge, enhanced performance and enabling innovation.

But it isn't just private enterprises that profit from standards. They also make a significant contribution to the success of local, regional and central government organizations.

Standards are an excellent way of encouraging a 'lighter-touch' approach to regulation. By complementing legislation, standards provide a convenient and effective means by which all stakeholders can fulfil their responsibilities.

By working with standards, government can make its procurement processes more efficient through eliminating

waste, driving down costs and maximizing value for money. Standards also increase efficiency across departments and organizations that adopt common-purchasing processes.

A collaborative approach to standardization provides a unique framework for sharing knowledge. This reduces the costs and risks associated with innovation, as well as guaranteeing quality, safety and accessibility. The public sector can benefit from innovation just as much as the private sector.

With managers under continual pressure to deliver on departmental and organizational objectives, standardization forms part of the solution. The message is loud and clear – standards are good for government.

WHAT ARE STANDARDS?

Formal consensus standards are publicly available documents that provide best-practice guidance. They are established by industry experts and representatives of government, business, research, test and certification organizations, academia, consumers and others.

Formal consensus standards fall into two categories:

- Technical standards detail the specifications organizations use to shape products or services so they fit market or regulatory needs.
- Quality-management system standards (such as ISO 9001) provide best-practice guidance on managing processes.

If there isn't an existing standard that can help you meet your specific objectives, you can work with BSI British Standards to devise a bespoke solution. For example, you could get involved in drawing up a publicly available specification ('PAS') as a quicker solution to your needs.

There are approximately 27,000 formal consensus standards in the BSI British Standards portfolio. These can be applied to products, services or processes. Each standard has a unique serial number and prefix that shows to which territory it applies (BS for Britain, EN for Europe and ISO for international standards).



Achieving best practice

To comply, all you have to do is buy the standard and implement its requirements in relevant areas of your department or organization. For added assurance, you may want to have your compliance verified by an independent certification body.

Although standards are separate to legal and regulatory requirements and their use is voluntary, standards compliance can be a convenient and effective way of meeting your legislative obligations. Read on to find out more.





LIGHTER TOUCH REGULATION

The Government has stated its commitment to reducing red tape and the regulatory burden faced by both the private and public sectors. This stance is supported by the United Kingdom's main political parties and has long been lobbied for by such leading organizations as

the Confederation of British Industry and the Federation of Small Businesses.

When it comes to inspection and enforcement, as with other areas of public service, the Government is also seeking to ensure that taxpayers continually receive best value from regulation.

One of the key ways to achieve this is to make the system more efficient by enabling regulators to

Rather than replacing regulations, standards complement them. They can be the foundation on which a risk-based approach to regulation can be built

concentrate their efforts on those who present the highest risk – which replaces the previous mindset of taking a blanket approach to inspection.

The Hampton Review

In his 2004 Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked Philip Hampton to lead a review into regulatory inspection and enforcement, with the aim of reducing costs while maintaining the UK's record on regulatory standards and outcomes.

The final report of the Hampton Review (*Reducing administrative burdens: effective inspection and enforcement*), published in March 2005, found that the system was too

complicated, and although there was much good practice, it was far from uniform.

Furthermore, overlaps in regulators' activities created duplicate requests for information, multiple inspections and excessive form-filling.

Hampton recommended that the old system be replaced by a limited number of routine, unannounced inspections concentrated on those most likely to be in contravention.

Standards complement regulation

Numerous stakeholders who have considered how to reduce the administrative burden of statutory regulation have voiced their support for the wider use of standardization as a ready-made solution.

Because they are shaped by best practice, the use of formal consensus standards usually

signifies proper management. Although not working with standards does not by itself signify any wrongdoing, it could act as a warning sign to regulators.

Rather than replacing existing regulations, standards complement them. They can be the foundation on which a risk-based approach to regulation can be built.

Working with standards can also help local and central government organizations ensure they do not break the law. The following two case studies show how and why.



NET GAINS

Glenn Sutherland of the Department for Transport's Electronic Publishing Unit explains how WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) guidelines help to ensure that his organization does not contravene web-accessibility legislation

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with disabilities

when it comes to recruitment, employment, education and service provision. Section III of the Act, which refers to website accessibility, came into force on 1 October 1999.

"All government departments are required to adhere to a Cabinet Office publication called *Guidelines for UK Government Websites* – it's an illustrated handbook for website-management teams," comments Glenn Sutherland, member of the Department for Transport's Electronic Publishing Unit.

"It contains a series of mandatory obligations, and one of these is that we have to meet WAI AA guidelines." Published in 1999 by the World Wide Web Consortium, the WAI guidelines are globally accepted standards for website accessibility for people using a wide range of user-agent devices, not just standard web browsers.

The WAI guidelines consist of 14 basic statements broken down into checkpoints ('priority one, two and three'). 'A' (the most basic standard) means a website complies with all priority one checkpoints. 'AA' signifies compliance with priority one and two checkpoints. To achieve 'AAA', the highest standard of accessibility, a website must comply with all priority one, two and three checkpoints.

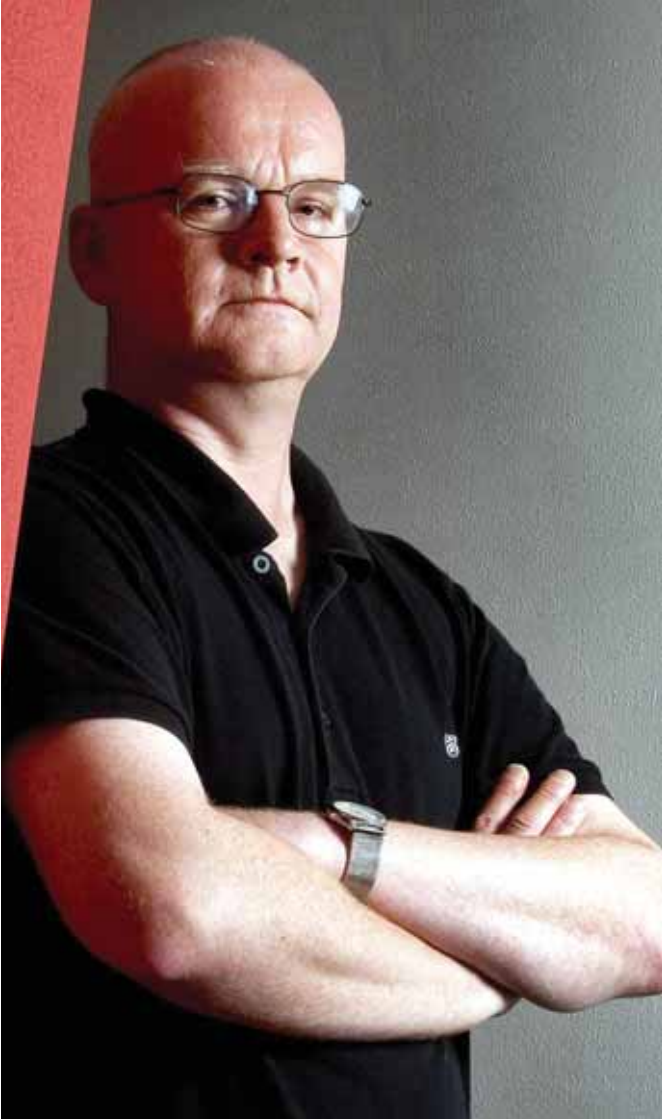
"Working with a standard is a user-friendly and effective way of ensuring you comply with the requirements of legislation.

"The WAI guidelines were written by website experts. The legislation isn't. In certain places, the DDA can be open to interpretation, especially when it comes to such requirements as 'making reasonable adjustments'. The standard helps to remove ambiguity, by telling us exactly what we need to do."

Attracting an average of 70,000 visitors a month, the current version of the Department for Transport's website went live in August 2003. A new one will be launched in 2007. "When we employ contractors they are all obliged to deliver work that is either WAI AA or AAA-compliant," Sutherland says.

To provide best-practice advice, (publicly available specification) *PAS 78: A guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites* has been developed by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and BSI British Standards. It was launched in spring 2006 and is available as a free download from the DRC website.

"We take accessibility seriously because we want to – not because we have to." Sutherland states. "It's not just about complying with legislation. Standards help you to achieve much more than that – which is better for the end user."



“

We take accessibility seriously because we want to. It's not just about complying with legislation. Standards help you to achieve much more than that, which is better for the end user

”

Glenn Sutherland

COMPLEMENTING REGULATION

Adria Pittock, Waste Projects Manager at Suffolk County Council, explains how ISO 14001 enables her organization to comply with environmental legislation as well as helping to achieve key targets such as ensuring best value

Having an environmental-management system (EMS) drawn up to the best-practice guidance provided by ISO 14001 benefits Suffolk County Council in numerous ways.

“As well as enabling us to assess our environmental impact, develop an action plan, improve our performance and monitor our progress, working with ISO 14001 gives us added confidence that we aren’t breaking environmental laws,” explains Adria Pittock, Suffolk County Council’s Waste Projects Manager. “In delivering our services, we are committed to meeting each

and every relevant regulatory and legislative requirement.”

Councils who break environmental laws face fines from the Environment Agency. What can be far worse is the adverse publicity that can follow.

Keeping up to speed with changes in environmental law is quite a challenge. “There’s a wide range of environmental legislation with which government organizations and others have to comply,” Pittock adds. “It covers everything from waste disposal and water management to storage of hazardous materials and controlling noise pollution.”

To make matters more complicated, new rules and regulations regarding the environment are frequently introduced, while existing legislation is also amended.

“Because ISO 14001 is based on best practice, compliance with the standard provides a convenient and effective way of ensuring you don’t contravene environmental laws,” comments Pittock.

Although Suffolk County Council must meet its targets on

safeguarding the environment, the amount of money the people of the county must pay for the services they receive remains a major consideration. Local councils must provide best value.

“We’re delivering real savings thanks to our EMS. For example, we’re now using much more recycled materials to resurface roads. Not only is that good for the environment – it’s cheaper,” Pittock explains.

In 2005, Suffolk County Council’s ISO 14001 compliance was certified by an accredited certification body. “We have an excellent record on the environment here at Suffolk County Council and we’re very proud of that,” says Pittock. “Working with ISO 14001 has helped us to achieve that success.”



“

Because ISO 14001 is based on best practice, compliance provides a convenient and effective way of ensuring you don't contravene environmental legislation

”

Adria Pittock





AIDING BETTER PROCUREMENT

Never before have government procurement managers been under as much pressure to deliver savings while ensuring best value and effective use of public money.

The key driver is HM Treasury's target of £21.5bn of annual efficiency savings up until 2007/08, inspired by Sir Peter Gershon's 2004 report *Releasing Resources to the Front Line*.

In practical terms that means:

- streamlining operations and eliminating all waste
- negotiating with suppliers to get better prices
- securing additional items from suppliers for the same spend
- buying with other departments or organizations to secure better value for money.

This needs to be achieved without reducing the quality or safety of goods and services bought with public money.

Standards provide a language that enables buyers and suppliers to communicate effectively

Standards provide the solution

Standards help managers increase efficiency and meet many other key procurement objectives.

Being able to use an existing or custom-made standard to specify exactly what you need from a supplier in terms of quality and functionality is a proven way to prevent costly mistakes happening in the supply chain. Standards provide a language that enables buyers and suppliers to communicate effectively.

Working with standards makes a powerful statement about a supplier's commitment to quality and best practice. This enables public-sector managers and their staff to buy with added confidence.

Not all obligations are linked to best value. Standards can help

to ensure that procurement is in tune with other policy objectives, such as requirements to buy goods and services from small businesses, for example.

For many years, public-sector organizations have had to make sure some of the goods they buy come from sustainable sources. Environmental-management standard ISO 14001 provides the perfect off-the-shelf solution.

Plugging the skills gap

Sir Peter Gershon also called for public-sector managers to improve the professionalism of their department's procurement activities. All too often, buying decisions were being made by those who lacked the necessary knowledge or experience, leading to waste and inefficiency.

Standards are a 'plug-and-play' solution to overcoming such skill gaps, because they provide established benchmarks of quality and best practice that everyone can use.

On an ongoing basis, managers have to guard against inefficiency creeping back in, especially in departments or organizations with high staff turnover. Standards are vehicles of knowledge transfer, which means they can sustain efficient procurement regardless of who comes or goes.

The following two case studies show how standards benefit two government procurement managers.



SAFETY AND QUALITY

Alan Glover, Lead Category Manager for Food and Nutrition at the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency, explains how working with ISO 9001 and other standards helps to ensure the products he buys are safe

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) is an executive agency of the Department of Health. It acts as a centre of expertise, knowledge and excellence in health service purchasing and supply.

As well as advising on policy and the strategic direction of procurement across the NHS, PASA contracts nationally for products and services which are critical to the health service.

The agency works with 400 NHS trusts and health authorities and manages 3,000 national purchasing contracts; influencing approximately half of the £7bn spent each year in the NHS on goods and services.

“Annual NHS food expenditure

is £300m, of which PASA accounts for £172m. We contract with about 200 food suppliers,” explains Alan Glover, Lead Category Manager for Food and Nutrition at PASA.

His procurement teams operate in accordance with the agency’s *Purchasing Procedures Manual*, which has retained certification to ISO 9001 since 2002.

“Procedures that were in place before 2002 have been developed gradually to recognize good practice,” Glover adds. “They ensure that effective procurement is achieved within our framework agreements, as well as helping us to comply with EU procurement directives.”

PASA evaluation criteria include a need for tenderers to comply with recognized food standards and ISO 9000 (a series of international standards that provides quality-management guidance and identifies quality-system elements).

“We also require our suppliers to comply with the NHS Code of Practice and Technical Standards for Food Manufacture, Storage and Distribution,” comments Glover. “These requirements help to ensure that safe food of appropriate quality is available to NHS consumers.”

Standards also help PASA to determine levels of quality required to meet patients’ nutritional needs, as well as enabling its buyers to compare products by using standards as a benchmark.

“We need to be sure that our supply base is trustworthy,” Glover adds, “we can only undertake independent testing on high and high-to-medium risk contracted food items. Standards help to give us that assurance.”

PASA’s environmental-management system (EMS) has been certified to ISO 14001 since 2000. As part of this, the agency has incorporated sustainable food into all its raw product requirements. PASA is a leading participant in the DEFRA Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative.

Speaking of the importance of PASA’s work, Glover concludes: “The NHS carries a greater degree of risk, because patients are potentially more vulnerable, so the provision of safe, nutritional food is key. Standards help us to achieve this.”



“

We need to be sure that our supply base is trustworthy. Standards help to give us that assurance

”

Alan Glover

INSPIRING CONFIDENCE

Ros Aird, Head of Hertfordshire Business Services, the internal organization that buys goods and services for Hertfordshire County Council, talks about the role standards play in making the council's procurement activities more efficient

Hertfordshire Business Services (HBS) is Herts County Council's principal centre for procurement. As well as buying goods and services for common use, placing orders and managing contracts worth £100m each year, the organization acts as guardian of best practice in procurement for the authority.

HBS is also a founder member of the Central Buying Consortium (CBC), which consists of 17 major local authorities, stretching from Essex to Northamptonshire and Dorset to Kent, which arranges joint contracts for goods and services worth some £250m each year.

"Our customers include schools, colleges and departments within the council, such as environment, fire and rescue, social services and adult-care services," comments Ros Aird, Head of HBS.

Having been reviewed in February 2005, the council's procurement strategy is guided by its commitment to the *National Procurement Strategy for Local Government (2003)* and to deliver best value to businesses and residents living in the county.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) holds ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certification, as well as being an Investors in People-accredited organization. Naturally, standards play a key role in HBS's activities.

"Our suppliers range from small local firms to multi-nationals," adds Aird. "We aim to buy the *right* goods and services for the *right* price, of the *right* quality, in the *right* place and at the *right* time.

"We work with suppliers that provide best value and appropriate support to delivery of the council's services. Standards help us do this."

HCC's suppliers must be reputable, reliable and customer-focused, as well as complying with statutory requirements.

"Where relevant, all goods and services supplied must comply with European Standards, British Standards or equivalent," Aird continues.

"Standards help make the buying process more efficient. As a manager, this is a crucial objective. If you are able to communicate specifically the quality you expect, there's less risk of suppliers getting it wrong – or of your dealing with the wrong supplier. Standards also provide a common point of reference for us.

"Much depends on the product and the business, but often we ask suppliers for evidence of quality-management systems. Compliance with standards gives you added confidence in the supplier," she concludes.

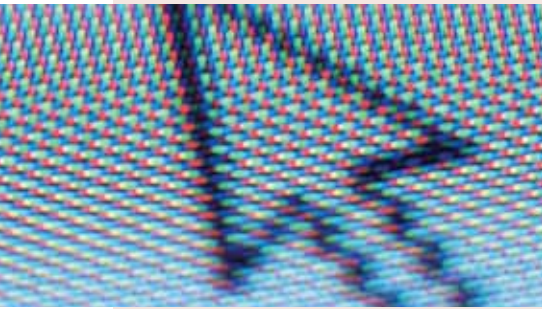


“

Standards help make the buying process more efficient. As a manager, this is a crucial objective

”

Ros Aird



SUPPORTING INNOVATION

Rather than being a barrier to creativity, standards are an essential element of the infrastructure in the United Kingdom that supports and encourages innovation.

When faced with the need to develop creative new solutions to a wide range of requirements, standards enable UK organizations to compete on the world stage.

Standards help to:

- create a common framework for innovation that encourages the sharing of knowledge
- minimize the need for duplication during research and development, thereby increasing the efficiency of the process
- maximize 'interoperability' (the ability of a product to be used in conjunction with others).

Standards are an essential element of the infrastructure in the UK that supports and encourages innovation

As sources of best practice and dependable knowledge, standards can be used throughout the phases of research and development, design, testing and manufacture to help reduce the costly and time-consuming need to start from scratch.

What is the point of trying to develop new answers when an off-the-shelf standard can provide a quick and cost-efficient solution?

Having to spend less time and money 'reinventing the wheel' means efforts can be concentrated on developing other

features. It can mean redirecting resources, thereby adding to an organization's overall level of efficiency.

Ensuring interoperability

No matter how special or innovative a product, it is likely that it will still need to function in harmony with other products or systems.

By acting as a common point of reference, standardization provides a means by which innovative technology can function seamlessly with technologies developed by others. This is especially important in an age when global application is becoming a basic requirement.

Many cutting-edge technological markets are underpinned by standardization. Consider mobile communication. Mobile telephone networks, sim cards and roaming operability are all a consequence of

standardization. Standards allow the seamless use of mobile phones in and across multiple territories.

The two case studies that follow show how formal consensus standards played a crucial role in delivering innovative solutions.



DRIVING INNOVATION

Marek Rejman-Greene, Head of the Home Office's Biometrics Centre of Expertise, explains how standards are vital to his department's groundbreaking work, as well as helping him to meet key departmental objectives such as maximizing efficiency and improving performance

Using such methods as automated fingerprint identification, iris recognition and facial verification, biometric technology will improve security by enabling the authorities to verify a person's identity by checking their unique physical features.

The Home Office is at the forefront of the development and application of this new technology. Whether used to police borders, reduce identity fraud or combat organized crime, biometric technologies are likely to have an increasing presence in UK life and government.

"Standards are crucial to our biometric systems development work," says Marek Rejman-Greene, head of the Home Office's Biometrics Centre of Expertise (BCE). "As well as helping to ensure that technology is fit for

purpose, standards offer assurance that UK programmes are compatible with those developed elsewhere in the world."

Already hailed as a vital tool in assessing the likely performance of biometric systems, ISO/IEC FCD 19795-1 is a key standard in the BCE's work. "It sets out best practice for testing biometric devices and reporting findings," Rejman-Greene explains. "Findings need to withstand scientific scrutiny: the standard sets out processes that make this possible."

The interoperability of UK research with work carried out by other countries is another key benefit offered by the standard. "For practical and financial reasons, products developed out of UK research need to be able to be used internationally," Rejman-Greene adds. "Validating test results using internationally accepted standards helps support that take-up."

"Biometric technologies in passports could be used in future immigration-management systems. It's imperative that they are recognized and accepted around the world," he stresses, "the standard makes this possible."

Standards also help Rejman-Greene meet some of his departmental objectives, helping him to save time and money, for example. "Our work would be much more complex without standards. Without having an agreed vocabulary for writing reports and assessing the results of other studies there would be extended discussion, debate and negotiation, which would be costly in terms of time, effort and money."



“

Standards are crucial to our work. As well as helping to ensure that technology is fit for purpose, standards offer assurance that UK programmes are compatible with those developed elsewhere in the world

”

Marek Rejman-Greene

ENABLING CHANGE

David Leslie, Services Development Manager with the City of Edinburgh Council, tells how BS 7666 enabled the council to develop an innovative solution that increased the efficiency of its Planning and Building Standards services

Smart City is the City of Edinburgh Council's action plan for e-Government implementation and modernization. The vision is to make Edinburgh one of Europe's most modern, forward-thinking and innovative local authorities.

Involving a total investment of £150m and a ten-year partnership with BT, a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) has begun to revolutionize the way the council delivers its services.

The council's innovative approach is perhaps best displayed through its Planning and Building Standards services. The success of a recent project means that individuals, building firms, architects and solicitors can view planning information online and submit their applications electronically, which speeds up the process considerably.

The pioneering project was made possible by BS 7666, a standard that defines how information about locations should be identified, indexed and supplied for IT systems so it can be shared more easily across and among organizations.

"The City of Edinburgh Council is Scotland's busiest planning and building standards authority," says Services Development Manager David Leslie. "It assesses and administers planning and building warrant applications, provides a public-facing enquiry service and supplies Property Enquiry Certificates [PECs]."

Previously, processes were paper-based and handling enquiries was a burden. "Information that should have been publicly accessible was difficult to get hold of because it was stored away in paper archives," recalls Leslie. "Submitting and paying for applications took much longer, too."

BT was commissioned to plan and build an ICT system. The first requirement was to create a BS 7666-compliant land and property 'gazetteer' (an index of geographic locations) that could be used for reference throughout the council.

"The gazetteer was fundamental to the project," Leslie stresses, "it allowed us to unify information held in six systems". Managed by Planning services, the unified source of information can be accessed through other council systems.

To provide new channels of information to the public, BT created an Internet portal for Planning and Building Standards. The foundation for this was the gazetteer and a technical infrastructure that linked the council's Planning services and those in Building Standards with a public-facing, front-end system.

Leslie says: "The initial phase enabled users to view applications and submit their comments. The next allowed users to request PECs online, as well as incorporating a user-registration and online-payment facility, which makes the process much quicker and more user friendly."

Then came a special module that allowed users to view building warrant applications. Finally, users were able to submit and pay for planning and building warrant applications online.

"The people of Edinburgh now benefit from quicker and more efficient services," says Leslie. "The transformation of our Planning and Building Standards services – enabled by BS 7666 – is a firm foundation on which we've built our objectives for joined-up government and our plans to exceed the targets of the Modernizing Government agenda."

“

The transformation of our services – enabled by BS 7666 – is a firm foundation on which we’ve built our objectives for joined-up government and our plans to exceed the targets of the Modernizing Government agenda

”

David Leslie



NEXT STEPS



Call us on **020 8996 7192** to discuss your needs and to find out more about how standards can help you achieve your specific objectives



Should you prefer, you can email your name and telephone number to **bsibritishstandards@bsigroup.com** and we'll call you



To read more information about how standards benefit government visit **www.bsigroup.com/governmentpublications**

- **BSI British Standards**, the UK's national standards body, is responsible for facilitating, drafting, publishing and marketing British Standards. Although the organization is independent of government, BSI works closely with the Department of Trade and Industry. In addition to more than 27,000 current formal consensus standards which are available 'off the shelf', you can work with BSI to develop solutions tailor-made to your needs.

© BSI British Standards

The opinions expressed within this publication are not necessarily those of BSI. No liability can be accepted for any inaccuracies or omissions.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted by any means or stored within any information retrieval system without the written consent of the copyright owner.

Standards benefit government organizations in numerous ways – as the case studies in this guide show.

By complementing legislation, they enable a ‘lighter-touch’ approach to regulation. In delivering best practice, standards make procurement more efficient by eliminating waste and ensuring maximum value for money. Working with standards provides a quicker and more cost-effective path to supporting innovation.

Produced specifically for government, this publication will help you find out how standards can help you to achieve your departmental objectives.